United Nations A/S-27/4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 June 2001

Original: English

Twenty-seventh special session

## Letter dated 11 June 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the African Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Pan-African Forum on the Future of the Children, which was held in Cairo, from 28 to 31 May 2001.

I would be grateful if this letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children.

(*Signed*) Ahmed **Aboul Gheit**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

01-41630 (E) 190701

**Annex to the letter dated 11 June 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

**Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children**
28-31 May 2001
Cairo, Egypt

**Pan-African Forum for Children**
**Africa Fit for Children**

**The African common position as Africa's contribution to the special session of the General Assembly on children**

# Declaration and Plan of Action

## I. Preamble

1. We, the participants in the Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children, meeting in Cairo, Egypt, from 28 to 31 May 2001, within the framework of the Organization of African Unity Council of Ministers decision CM/Dec.542 (LXXII) endorsed by the thirty-sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), mandating the OAU secretariat to develop an African common position, in consultation with member States, and relevant African and international institutions as well as the civil society organizations to be tabled before the special session of the General Assembly on children in September 2001.

2. We acknowledge and affirm that it is the responsibility of African Governments, citizens, families, civil society, regional and subregional organizations and the international community to ensure that children in Africa realize their full range of rights.

3. We are cognizant of the various OAU and non-OAU declarations, decisions and recommendations relating to children, in particular:

- The Bamako Initiative on Child Survival, Development and Universal Immunization in Africa, and on the Programme of Essential Medicines for Children and Their Mothers (1989);
- The Consensus of Dakar (1992);
- Declaration AHG/Decl.1 (XXX) on AIDS and the Child in Africa (1994);
- The Tunis Declaration on the Follow-up of the Mid-Decade Goals for the Child (1995);
- Resolution AHG/Res.251 (XXXII) declaring the period 1997 to 2006 the Decade of Education in Africa (1996);
- The Common Position and Plan of Action and Strategies to support HIV/AIDS Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Children infected by HIV/AIDS 2000;

- Conference of Parliamentarians from Maghreb and West and Central Africa for the "Global Movement for Children";
- The Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases (April 2001);
- Bamako Declaration "Vision 2010" on the Reduction of Maternal and Neo-Natal Mortality (May 2001);
- The Kigali Declaration on Children and HIV/AIDS Prevention (May 2001);
- Third Summit of African First Ladies for Peace and Humanitarian Issues, Libreville, Gabon (May 2001).

4. More than 10 years after the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted and subsequently came into force, and almost two years after the entry into force of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, we reaffirm our full commitment to the obligations enshrined in these instruments. The challenge is to transform the State obligation, solemnly entered into through the collective act of acceding to these instruments, to the practical realization of the rights of the child in Africa.

5. We strongly believe that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child provide the basis for action in favour of children. All the rights contained therein are indivisible and must equally be respected and realized.

## II. Basic principles

6. The challenge now is to reaffirm our commitment to ensure that the goals of today are met. We recognize that the future of Africa lies with the well-being of its children and youth. The prospect for the socio-economic transformation of the continent rests with investing in the young people of the continent. **Today's investment in children is tomorrow's peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development**. We acknowledge that African children and youth represent more than half of the continent's population, But their views have not been sought concerning the pressing social, economic and human rights issues that directly affect them. **Africa's young voices must not be ignored; they must be heard**.

7. We affirm that responding to the needs of Africa's children is an imperative. Children should be at the core of priorities for policy makers. **Africa's children are indispensable actors for the present and future of our continent**.

8. We note that Africa's children in many ways are the most disadvantaged in the world. Their lives are often too short and their life-chances are too limited. They are exposed to violence and HIV/AIDS infection; they are deprived of education; they are vulnerable to malnutrition and disease. The special needs and demands of Africa's children and youth require focused attention now and in the coming years. **Africa's children need full support and commitment and they need it now**.

9. We note further that Africa's youth are facing a future affected by violence and poverty, and all-too-often foreshortened by HIV/AIDS, malaria and other pandemics. We also note that natural and man-made disasters as well as the negative

impact of external debt servicing, globalization and trade liberalization have added to the plight of Africa's children. Youth has been overlooked in national and international action and policy-making, and the links between children and youth have been too long neglected. But the energy and commitment of youth represent a formidable force for positive change. They will determine which direction Africa takes in the coming decades. **The children and the youth are our greatest untapped resource**.

10. We reaffirm that children have a right to enjoy a healthy environment for the realization of their physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Equally they have a duty to participate in activities that rehabilitate or protect the environment.

11. We are deeply concerned that Africa continues to be plagued by war and armed conflicts which have an enormous and disproportionate negative impact on the civilian population, particularly children and women, a situation in which the human rights of children can never be fully realized.

12. We reaffirm Africa's commitments to peaceful coexistence and the settlement of disputes through negotiations, dialogue and reconciliation as an essential condition for the creation of a child and youth friendly and conducive environment for the protection, survival, growth and development of children and youth.

13. We admit that although some progress has been achieved, the record of the last 11 years is still unsatisfactory. Overall, Africa's children have lost another decade, and with the foreseen but unprevented tragedy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Africa stands in danger of losing a generation. This record compels us to recognize our neglect of basic obligations, and challenges us to adopt alternative paradigms for tomorrow. We cannot afford to give up on another decade of African children and youth. **Africa's children need to enjoy their rights to health, education and training now. At the same time, they must assume their responsibilities**.

14. We submit that the special needs of Africa's children have to date not been adequately reflected in international policies and programmes. Africa's children and youth need and demand a special place in all policy-making structures and in the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on children. This Forum is intended to articulate those special needs: its recommendations must be specific and relevant to Africa. **The concerns of children and youth in Africa must be at the centre of the global agenda**.

15. We stress that responsibility for realizing the rights of the child falls at all levels, children, youth, on families, on communities, on civil society, on the private sector, on national Governments, on subregional and regional organizations, and on the international community. **The agenda of "Africa Fit for Children" must ignite real commitment, sustained resolve and concrete action**.

16. More than 10 years after the historic World Summit for Children, and the adoption of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action that set specific goals for child rights and welfare to be met by 2000, we are in a position to evaluate progress (see annex). Much has been achieved, but many promises and aspirations remain to be met. Some of the shortcomings have arisen from external factors, while others are our own responsibility.

17. We reaffirm the principle of the universality of the rights of children within the framework of positive cultural diversity.

## III. "Africa Fit for Children": the way forward

18. In the light of the above, we solemnly urge Heads of State and Government to reaffirm their previous commitments to African children and solemnly commit themselves further to the following:

(a) A vision for Africa's future;

(b) Firm commitment to visionary — but realistic and achievable — goals;

(c) Clear and realistic plan of action with workable steps and clear timetables;

(d) Establishment of a true partnership for joint action between African Governments, civil society, youth and children, families and communities and the international community;

(e) Widespread and meaningful participation of youth and children in the planning, implementation and monitoring of these undertakings;

(f) Quality leadership practising transparency and accountability in favour of a rights-based policy in the interest of children and youth.

19. **We also urge Heads of State and Government to commit themselves to a clear vision for Africa's future**. Africa's children and youth are its present and its future. If Africa is to play a meaningful role in the twenty-first century, African countries must invest in Africa's children and youth. It is essential that the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are treated as State obligations, in the framework of a rights-based approach to child survival and development. There is urgent need to provide a peaceful enabling environment for the achievement of these rights through the establishment of appropriate structures for implementation and monitoring. It is also essential that youth are fully included in these obligations.

20. We request our Governments to put in place a programme that encapsulates the vision of children and youth themselves. The participation of children and youth in setting goals and policies over the last 11 years has been insufficient for us to be able to accurately reflect the vision of Africa's youth and children in any document written in 2001. We acknowledge that a vision for Africa's future is a continent in which, by 2010, the following objectives will have been achieved:

(a) Young people confidently expect to live longer and healthier lives than their parents, with increased life chances;

(b) African children and youth are able to achieve personal and collective development in a context that reflects their culture;

(c) Young Africans believe, with good reason, that the future of their communities, countries and continent, is in their hands.

21. These points reflect the very important truth that confidence in the future is the foundation for progressive social change. In seeking to build Africa Fit for Children, we must continue to respect human dignity amid the statistical indicators of progress.

22. **African countries must commit themselves to realistic and achievable goals**. The goals laid out in the 1990 World Summit for Children World Declaration

are yet to be achieved along with others subsequently adopted. Today we must recommit ourselves to the following indispensable obligations:

(a) Non-AIDS-related child mortality rates should be reduced to the levels affirmed in the 1990 World Declaration;

(b) Mother-to-child transmission of HIV should be reduced by 25 per cent by 2005;

(c) The incidence of HIV in young people aged 15-24 should be reduce by 25 per cent by 2005;

(d) HIV/AIDS prevention and information services should reach 90 per cent of youths by 2003;

(e) Universal primary education and early childhood care and development in gender and in the treatment of children with special needs, should be achieved by 2010 and gender disparities in education should be eliminated;

(f) Exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of age and continued breastfeeding with appropriate complementary feeding up to two years and beyond should be promoted, protected and supported. All counties should implement the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes;

(g) The eradication of poliomyelitis by 2005 should be achieved;

(h) Infant and child mortality due to vaccine-preventable diseases, malaria and diarrhoea and other child killers should be reduced by 50 per cent by 2005;

(i) Ensure implementation of effective family planning programmes;

(j) There should be full protection for children in situations of armed conflict and children under foreign occupation including demobilization of all combatants aged under 18;

(k) Every child should be immediately protected from violence, neglect, sexual exploitation and trafficking;

(l) Measures including the revision of legal codes and procedures to enable children to give evidence in an appropriate way, the development of child-friendly police and courts and the facilitation of social action litigation in favour of children should be under way in all countries by 2010.

23. Fulfilling the above requires a range of actions to mobilize resources, both financial and human. Achieving the goals laid out above will require increased effort and commitment, from a wide range of stakeholders including governments, civil society, the media, the private sector and the international community. All have responsibilities towards Africa's children, to realize the rights enshrined in international instruments. Africa's children deserve as much as children elsewhere in the world.

# Plan of Action

## I. Overall framework

24. The Plan of Action is aimed at realizing the rights of the child in Africa by means of meeting the goals laid down in the framework, "Africa Fit for Children". At a continental level, the Plan of Action is primarily a set of guidelines for national plans of action, supplemented by regional mechanisms for partnership and monitoring.

25. **We call for clear and realistic national plans of action**. At a national level, every plan of action must have clear steps and timetables for all partners. These must reflect the diverse capacities of African governments and other stakeholders, and the uneven quality of international development cooperation. The Plan of Action should be country-specific, conceived, planned and agreed by stakeholders in each country, in line with the agreed goal of realizing the rights of the child.

26. The Plan of Action prioritizes children and youth. Any effective action depends upon resource allocation, domestically and internationally. Both the quality and quantity of available resources are important.

(a) National planning and international development cooperation should reflect the **prioritization of early childhood and youth;**

(b) Children and youth should be the **first to benefit** from resource mobilization;

(c) Children should **never be left behind**. Policy-makers should ensure that programmes for children and youth are protected from austerity measures or assistance cutbacks;

(d) **Education is non-negotiable.** Free and compulsory basic education is a responsibility that should be shouldered by all and provided free of any conditionality;

(e) Special additional resources should be mobilized for HIV/AIDS programmes including those targeted at youth and at minimizing mother-to-child transmission. For Africa's young people, **HIV/AIDS is the number one survival issue**;

(f) **Action is required at all levels**, from the family to the international level.

## II. Enhancing life chances

27. We urge our Governments to take measures to ensure that every child in Africa has a good start in life, and to grow and develop in child friendly, nurturing environment of love, acceptance, peace, security and dignity. To achieve this, the following activities should be done:

(a) Provide assistance and protection of family units and the extended family system;

(b) Ensure proper growth and development of children through provision of education, and information to families, caregivers and the community on health, early childhood care and development services, and nutrition;

(c) Intensify immunization programmes to meet the set goals on immunization. Expand national immunization days to include services for mothers to allow them to take care of their own health together with that of the children;

(d) Increased national budgetary allocation to the health sector particularly to the primary health care sector. Governments shall commit themselves to mobilize domestic and external resources, including sensitizing communities to establish special health funds in order to restore the weak or collapsed health services in their respective countries;

(e) Expand primary health care to include reproductive health services, safe delivery units and antenatal and postnatal care and focus on reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity. Develop new training programmes for primary health care providers in order to make these services possible;

(f) Integrate programmes for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis and other infectious diseases in primary health care services, in particular the prevention of mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission;

(g) Implement the 2000 Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on Roll-Back Malaria and observe 25 April of each year as Africa Malaria Control Day;

(h) Ensure food security of families and communities, give education and information on timely and appropriate complementary feeding and improve health care services to reduce malnutrition. Promote community-based strategies that help in monitoring the nutritional status of women and children;

(i) Strengthen measures to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders by the year 2005, vitamin A deficiency disorders and anaemia by the year 2010;

(j) Strengthen measures to increase access to safe water and improve sanitation. Promote hygiene education in schools and in the community. Involve women in the planning, installing and managing of water and sanitation systems;

(k) Prepare a code of ethics governing the behaviour and attitudes within families and the society.

## III. Overcoming HIV/AIDS

28. Africa must overcome HIV/AIDS in order to fulfil children's rights to survival and development, thus special efforts should be made to:

(a) Resort to all available means including ethical, moral and traditional values to prevent HIV/AIDS;

(b) Improve access to programmes for prevention of mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmissions, increase access to care, support and treatment for infected mothers and their children and share identified best practices on how to reduce transmission;

(c) Support community initiatives to help families and communities cope with HIV/AIDS and establish mechanisms for alternative care for children orphaned

by AIDS and other vulnerable children. Enact relevant legislation to protect the rights of people affected by HIV/AIDS including orphans and widows;

(d) Strengthen information, education and communication for and with children and youth to increase awareness on HIV/AIDS, to foster positive attitudes towards those affected and reduce stigmatization and exclusion;

(e) Promote holistic health care services, in particular, improve access to reproductive health information, counselling and voluntary testing services for HIV/AIDS. Involve children and youth in developing and implementing programmes aimed at changing high-risk behaviour among young people. Introduce sexuality education in school curricula and include programmes on HIV/AIDS prevention;

(f) Enact and utilize appropriate legislation and international trade regulations to ensure availability of drugs including anti-retroviral drugs at affordable prices, production of pertinent pharmaceuticals and technologies for the care and treatment of those affected by HIV/AIDS;

(g) Enact legislation, where necessary, to ensure that there is no discrimination in school or the workplace against children and young people living with HIV/AIDS;

(h) Establish a multisectoral national policy on the impact of HIV/AIDS on child development and involve all stakeholders;

(i) Ensure that children affected by conflicts including refugee and internally displaced children are included in HIV/AIDS prevention and response programmes and that such programmes are viewed as an essential component of all humanitarian relief and assistance.

## IV. Realizing the right to education

29. Education is a basic right that allows every child to develop to her or his fullest potential. To ensure the full realization of this right, Governments should:

(a) Rededicate themselves to the realization of the OAU Education Decade goals and ensure coordination on regional economic communities for the effective implementation of the goals;

(b) Commit themselves to the provision of quality, free and compulsory basic education. Governments must mobilize international donor community and financial institutions including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to commit themselves to support this goal;

(c) Create partnerships with non-formal providers, civil society organizations and the community in order to achieve the goal of free and universal education;

(d) Urgently address the challenge of providing relevant education tailored to national social and economic needs, current level of development while taking into account the forces of globalization;

(e) Draw lessons from new models of education like the "new basic school" movement now becoming common in the West African States, which focus on skills

and learning related to local culture and moral values, teaching in local language, as well as to civic education;

(f) Take into account national needs, local realities, indigenous languages and knowledge, special learning needs of children, children in need of special measures, girls, and children from nomadic communities, in curriculum development and in delivery of education;

(g) Strengthen and involve communities in the mobilization of resources, management of schools, reconsider staffing in view of the toll HIV/AIDS has in the education system, review remuneration for teachers and ensure continuous teacher education;

(h) Strengthen the teaching of science and the utilization of the new information and technologies, as well as innovative teaching and learning approaches and methods;

(i) Eliminate gender disparities in education by taking special measures to increase girls' access to schools, improve their participation and retention rates;

(j) Strengthen vocational training programmes, introduce life skills and create other training opportunities for adolescents so as to gain employable skills and for self-development;

(k) Ensure the integration of peace education, democracy, human rights, humanitarian law, sexuality education, health education and environmental protection in the education system;

(l) Genocide being a crime against humanity, the education of genocide orphaned children should constitute mankind's concern. To this end, the United Nations through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), should contribute to the financing of education of these children in countries where they exist.

## V. Realizing the right to protection

30. **Protection of children in situations of armed conflict and under foreign occupation** is a special imperative. Children caught up in armed conflicts shall be given increased care and protection in order to reduce the devastating impacts of war. Special measures shall be taken to:

(a) Stop the use of children as soldiers, demobilize all combatants aged under 18 and develop and implement programmes for their rehabilitation and social reintegration;

(b) Protect former child soldiers from retribution, summary executions, arbitrary detention, torture and other punitive actions by using the provisions in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(c) Protect children from abduction and stop their use as slaves;

(d) Curb the illicit trade on small arms and light weapons at the national and international levels. Create partnerships with civil society in preventing illicitly acquired arms, and in awareness raising as well as in monitoring government policy;

(e) Ensure special protection and access to humanitarian aid and programmes for refugee children, traumatized children, internally displaced children and children in post-conflict situations;

(f) Eliminate the threat posed by landmines and other unexploded ordnance by ensuring respect for the Ottawa Convention by all States parties, developing programmes for mine clearance and survivor rehabilitation programmes in consultation with the affected communities and the military;

(g) Ensure that member States reaffirm their commitment to international humanitarian law, and those States which have not signed and ratified the following conventions are encouraged to do as soon as possible, as a further measure for protecting children:

- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
- The optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- The optional protocol on child prostitution and pornography;
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction;
- The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its two additional protocols of 1977;

(h) Encourage member States to ratify/accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as a step towards prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes and to end impunity for crimes against children;

(i) Strengthen the capacity of regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and groupings to focus on the rights of children when negotiating ceasefires and peace agreements;

(j) Ensure that member States reaffirm their commitments to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol as well as the 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

31. **Legal protection** of children outside situations of armed conflict and under foreign occupations is essential. For increased legal protection for children Governments should:

(a) Carry out comprehensive review of all legislation, with a special focus on personal and family law, to ensure conformity with the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Customary laws inconsistent with the interests of the child and the international norms governing the rights of the child should be eliminated or readapted;

(b) Develop child, youth and gender friendly inheritance and adoption laws in the States where adoption is permitted;

(c) Develop mechanisms for enforcement and monitoring of legislation; ensure that Children are educated on their rights; ensure easy access to legal protection; and introduce child friendly court systems and divergent systems for young offenders;

(d) Promote community and civil society organizations, participation in monitoring child rights abuses and reform reporting processes for such abuses;

(e) Strengthen structures for registration of births as soon as children are born, particularly in rural areas and among nomadic communities;

(f) Alleviate the humanitarian impact of sanctions regimes on children.

32. **Protection of children from violence, neglect, abuse and sexual exploitation** must be enhanced. Children shall be given increased protection against all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. To ensure this, the following actions shall be carried out:

(a) Take urgent steps to eliminate child labour, in particular, the worst forms of child labour, as defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182. Those member States that have not ratified ILO Convention No. 182 should do so quickly and also put in place mechanisms for its implementation;

(b) Curb the growing phenomenon of child trafficking through prevention and protection measures for children as well as prosecution of traffickers. Put in place effective regional and bilateral agreements on border controls and handling of victims of child trafficking;

(c) Make use of the technical and financial cooperation provided by ILO, UNICEF and other international agencies in elaborating their programmes and policies against child labour;

(d) Protect children from all forms of violence and torture and take corrective measures to ensure that children are treated in a manner that respects their physical and mental integrity;

(e) Protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation through partnerships with civil society to promote safe homes, schools, neighbourhoods and communities. Establish alternative care systems for children without families;

(f) Sensitize children, families, care givers and the communities on the harmful consequences of sexual exploitation. Address factors like tourism, pornography, cultural and traditional practices which encourages sexual exploitation. Develop and implement programmes for the rehabilitation of victims of sexual abuse and exploitation;

(g) Eliminate all harmful traditional practices, which are detrimental to girls' and women's rights and health. Stop female genital mutilation and support initiatives for alternative methods for socialization. Stop early marriages and enact and enforce legislation on minimum marriage age for girls;

(h) Protect children from substance abuse by creating widespread awareness on their harmful effects as well as giving them life-coping skills. Enforce and monitor policies on illicit drug cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption, including prohibiting intoxicant solvents, psychotropic substance and tobacco advertising;

(i) Develop and implement programmes for and with children in need of special measures at the local, national and regional levels. Promote access to and inclusion in education, rehabilitation, cultural and recreational activities and the improvement of the physical environment.

## VI. Participation of youth and children

33. The right of youth and children to participate, and to have their civil rights respected, is stipulated in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It should be enforced without delay.

34. Fulfilling the requirements of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding participation rights requires the following actions by Governments, as the principal duty bearers:

(a) Enactment of necessary legal measures to ensure that children's views are taken into account on issues relevant to their interests;

(b) Legal reforms necessary to provide for public interest or social action litigation on behalf of children by interested groups;

(c) Special attention to the gender dimension of any legal reforms or substantive measures to promote participation;

(d) Strengthening of groups that represent youth and children;

(e) Facilitation of freedom of association and expression for youth and children, including the setting up, consolidating, broadening and strengthening children's parliaments;

(f) Support widespread child rights education, within traditional communities, among children and youth in schools and out of schools, at institutions of higher learning, within the media, police, armed forces and peace keepers, health providers, the judiciary and all State institutions from the local level to the national level;

(g) Support initiatives to increase understanding of African traditional values, practices and cultural perceptions of children in relation to child rights and children's participation in particular;

(h) Support the role of youth in peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction, particularly in post-conflict situations;

(i) Facilitation of participation of youth and children in international forums concerning issues relevant to their interests;

(j) Networking, communications and information sharing among youth and children.

35. Youth participation is particularly relevant to the goal of reducing HIV infection among young people. Young people should be engaged in research concerning HIV and its social epidemiology, and in conceptualizing, designing, implementing and evaluating programmes to reduce HIV infection. The gender dimension of these activities needs special attention given the particular vulnerability of girls to HIV.

36. A commitment to an "Africa Fit for Children" in 2010 should truly reflect the stated concerns of Africa's youth and children, as manifested by their full participation in the review of the decade and the goals and strategies for the subsequent decade.

## VII. Actions at all levels

37. We call for actions at all levels. Social mobilization shall be intensified so that all sections of society will be urged to take action for the well-being of children and the protection of their rights.

38. Strong partnerships shall be created with people's movements, youth movements, professional networks, artists, intellectuals, the mass media, the business community, women's groups, religious and traditional leaders, children, the military, adolescents and political leaders as well as civil society organizations in order to advocate for the rights of children and to tackle problems affecting them.

39. It is crucial and necessary to run child rights popularization programmes in all languages, including national languages.

40. Community participation, which seeks active and genuine involvement of the people, especially children and women, in the designing of policies and programmes for children and youth, shall be vigorously pursued.

41. Strengthen family units, revitalize the extended family to fulfil its traditional role and functions related to social reintegration and security, and reform adverse or harmful customary practices and biases, whilst promoting positive cultural and traditional practices that enhance moral and ethical values.

42. Governments should mobilize human and financial resources from private and public sources, reduce or rationalize military expenditures, re-focus national budgets and ensure their efficient utilization. Collaborate with economic and social development partners, international financial institutions, donor governments and regional economic communities for resource mobilization and provision of technical assistance.

43. Governments should advocate and negotiate with the international community and financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF for: debt cancellation; increased development aid; increased international trade and investment; and assistance in accelerating the growth of information communication technology as steps in reviving African economies, increasing the benefits of globalization and minimizing its negative impact.

44. Governments should contribute to the strengthening of research capacities on childhood through the establishment and/or consolidation of the research networks on childhood in Africa, with a view to develop close linkage between research, decision-taking and advocacy in favour of childhood in Africa.

45. OAU, as the continental body, should lead the way in promoting children's participation by organizing sessions in which children can participate and contribute. Specific initiatives include:

(a) The Youth against AIDS Network must be encouraged;

(b) Youth and children must participate fully in drawing up the OAU-Economic Commission for Africa-UNICEF annual and biannual continental reports on children and child-relevant issues;

(c) A study by OAU on who benefits from conflicts in Africa.

46. There is much to be learned from existing best practices within Africa, such as the role of parents and guardians. There are complementarities of experience between countries. Some countries have led the way in child protection initiatives (e.g., child-friendly courts), others in child participation programmes (e.g., children's parliaments), while others have set standards in providing for education and health care. These positive experiences should be shared, scaled up and reproduced.

## VIII. International partnership: Africa Fit for Children

47. We call upon the international community to fulfil its commitment to assist in realizing the rights of the child in Africa. This obligation reflects historic and ongoing international responsibilities vis-à-vis the continent, and a common interest in the future of the African continent. The Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for international solidarity in realizing child rights. New, enhanced international development cooperation is required to make this aspiration a reality. We call upon all our international partners to give priority attention to the needs of African children by accelerating debt relief for poverty reduction; fully implementing the 20/20 Initiative in line with the Oslo and Hanoi consensus as well as the declaration of the World Summit on Social Development to ensure basic social services; and fulfilling the yet-to-be attained internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance as soon as possible.

48. **We call for a true partnership**. The complexity and ambition of the goals of the World Summit for Children and their dependence on factors such as resource flows, international action to overcome HIV/AIDS and progress towards regional peace and stability, means that all stakeholders need to be involved in partnership. African Governments, civil society, youth and children and the international community all have roles to play. The commitment to a revised set of goals must therefore be a collective one, with specific requirements on each partners. This partnership can only succeed if there is African ownership.

49. A true partnership also entails a high level commitment to work towards a global compact: Africa Fit for Children. Governments in partnership with civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, should set goals, consistent with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and provide mechanisms for accountability, such as regular, public, independent reviews of performance and outcomes conducted with the full participation of civil society, youth and children.

## IX. Follow-up actions and monitoring

50. Each member State shall develop clear and realistic national plans with achievable goals, clear timetables with adequate resources by the end of year 2002. Member States are urged to review progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action on an annual basis, preferably before the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission meets.

51. Member States shall establish mechanisms for high-level political supervision and monitoring of the implementation of national programmes for and with children.

52. Participatory monitoring mechanisms should be established at the national level to allow communities, civil society organizations and children to monitor the programmes intended for children as well as child rights abuses and violations.

53. OAU and the Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in collaboration with the regional economic communities should monitor member States implementation of the Plan of Action, evaluate the performance in achieving the set goals and propose measures to be taken accordingly.

54. The special needs of African children need to be examined on a regular basis at the continental and regional levels along with transparent evaluations of progress towards meeting the commitments of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

55. OAU, in close collaboration with ECA and UNICEF, will produce a regular biennial report on the status of the African child. This report will evaluate the implementation of the commitments undertaken by Governments, and will examine the state of Africa's children in all dimensions. This assessment is particularly crucial now, in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its impact on children.

56. To this end, OAU would consider holding special sessions for children every two years to review progress in implementing commitments to children's rights and welfare. OAU should also conduct a mid-term review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Plan of Action in the year 2006.

57. In the light of this, every two years OAU in collaboration with ECA and UNICEF should jointly present a report at the OAU Summit focused on a specific issue relevant to children. Examples include trafficking in children, HIV/AIDS and child combatants.

58. Encourage the development of information systems at country level capable of generating data and the situation of the African child. This should be coordinated and managed by an observatory for the African child whose objective will, among other things, be to contribute to preparation of the above-mentioned reports.

59. Member States should use disaggregated data by geographical units and population groups to enable decision-makers understand data better and formulate appropriate decisions about children and their rights.

60. This Declaration and Plan of Action should be widely disseminated. It should be provided to schools and other educational institutions, together with copies of the summary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in local languages. Teachers and community leaders should be informed about the significance of this Declaration and Plan of Action so that they can better teach its contents and involve children and young people in pursuing strategies to monitor its implementation and to realize their rights.

## X. Call to action

61. Africa's children deserve a better future. This must be based upon the realization of the rights of the child. This will be achieved only in the context of honest and self-critical appraisal of the record of the last eleven years, and realistic and principled commitments for the next decade. Anything less than this is a betrayal of the future of Africa.

62. **The time for action is now. Africa's children cannot wait.**

## Annex

### Evaluation of the last decade

1. All African countries with the exception of Somalia have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989. African countries led the way in acceding to the Convention, signalling a readiness at the highest level to undertake the obligation of realizing the rights of the child.

2. African countries adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in July 1990, replicating and strengthening the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensuring that they are applicable to the situation of the child in Africa. The African Charter entered into force in November 1999.

3. At the September 1990 World Summit for Children Africa's leaders committed themselves to achieving a set of goals for children over the coming years (World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s). Seventeen African Heads of State and Government attended the Summit and a further 31 were represented.

4. At the time of the Summit, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child were not in force, and Governments were voluntary pledging themselves to work towards certain goals. Eleven years on, the question is different. It is one of compliance with the obligations laid down in these two instruments. We are entering a new era in which States' fulfilment of their obligations to the rights of the child can be assessed objectively.

5. In the World Summit for Children Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, Africa's leaders committed themselves to the following overall goals to be met by 2000 (para. 5):

(a) Reduction of 1990 under-5 mortality rates by one third or to a level of 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is the greater figure;

(b) Reduction of maternal mortality rates by half of 1990 levels;

(c) Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by one half of 1990 levels;

(d) Universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal;

(e) Universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school age children;

(f) Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy;

(g) Protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly in situations of armed conflicts.

6. These goals were achievable. The world had, in 1990, and continued to possess during the following 11 years, the resources and mechanisms to achieve all of these goals in full. Eleven years on, we can assess the commitment and the current status of these goals objectively.

7. Overall, across Africa, these goals have not been achieved. There have been important gains in some countries and in some sectors, but setbacks in many countries in many sectors. The diversity of Africa's performance is a significant fact that must be recognized and incorporated into future programmes and policies. Overall, the lessons of the decade of the 1990s provide foundations for the countries in Africa in terms of what works and what requires major modifications in terms of strategy and approach in order to achieve these unfinished agenda.

8. In the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, Africa's leaders committed themselves to the following national level follow-up actions (para. 34) (in summary):

(a) Prepare, before the end of 1991, national programmes of action to implement the commitments undertaken, including the participation of local governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civic groups;

(b) Re-examine programmes and policies so as to accord higher priority to the well-being of children in general, so as to meet the major goals of the World Summit for Children;

(c) Re-examine national budgets to ensure that programmes aimed at achieving these goals have priority and are protected in times of economic austerity and structural adjustment;

(d) Families, communities and civil society should be encouraged to play an active role;

(e) Establish mechanisms for the regular and timely collection, analysis and publication of data required to monitor relevant social indicators, with particular attention to mechanisms to alert policy makers quickly to any adverse trends so as to enable timely corrective action;

(f) Examine current arrangements for responding to natural disasters and man-made calamities;

(g) Undertake further research and development to accelerate progress towards the goals of the Summit.

9. Once again, the record is disappointing. Substantial progress has been achieved in some countries and with regard to some issues, but not in other countries or with regard to other issues. Overall, the majority of these actions have not been undertaken by African Governments, or have been undertaken purely in a nominal way with little or no impact on resource allocation, policy-making or actions with relevance to children.

10. In the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, international leaders and international organizations were requested to undertake the following international level follow-up actions (para. 35) (in summary):

(a) All international development agencies (multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental) should examine how they can contribute to the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, and should report their plans and programmes before the end of 1991 and periodically thereafter;

(b) All regional institutions should consider the Commitment and Plan of Action with a view to developing agreements for collaboration in implementation;

(c) Full cooperation of all United Nations agencies and organs is requested;

(d) United Nations assistance is requested to institute appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Plan of Action;

(e) UNICEF is requested to prepare, in collaboration with others, a consolidated analysis of the plans and actions undertaken by individual countries and the international community in support of the child-related development goals of the 1990s.

In addition, paragraph 34 (iii) (see para. 8 (c) above) requires donor Governments to prioritize children in their assistance budgets.

11. Concerning regional and international actions on behalf of Africa's children, progress has again fallen well short of expectations. There has been significant progress in some areas (e.g., vaccination against poliomyelitis, increase in primary education enrolment in some countries) but these gains have been too few, and there has been a notable lack of concrete action on other priorities.

12. The record of implementing the World Summit for Children Plan of Action and achieving the World Declaration goals has been considerably poorer in Africa than in other regions of the world, in marked contrast to the enthusiastic participation of African leaders in the World Summit for Children and the alacrity with which African Governments acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

13. Some of the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals in the World Declaration are implicitly or explicitly resource-dependent. But for some rights such as the right to education this is not the case. State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child unconditionally and expressly commit themselves to immediate provision of universal free primary education. Education is not only a fundamental right but is the foundation of many other rights. Mother's education is the strongest determinant of child survival and development. Educational levels among a populace are the foundation for social and economic development and democracy and good governance. Currently, 60 million African children are estimated to be out of school, more than half the world's total. Education cannot be neglected or postponed.

14. Gender disparities in education and employment have narrowed but remain significant. Fortunately, sub-Saharan Africa has never suffered marked gender disparities in child survival. Serious discrimination and abuse against the girl child remains a serious concern. Particular areas needing attention include:

(a) The continuing lower rates of girls' enrolment in schools. This is not only an abuse in its own right but also has future implications for child survival, fertility rates and social development;

(b) The continuation of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation;

(c) The high levels of HIV seropositivity among teenage girls;

(d) The scarcity of victim-friendly courts that address crimes specifically against women and children.

15. Child labour and trafficking in children has not declined. ILO estimates that there are 80 million child workers in Africa and this number is likely to rise to 100

million by 2015. Most of this work is underpaid and some of it is wholly unfree and unpaid, amounting to slavery. Trafficking in children continues in some of the poorest countries. More children than ever are exposed to violence and sexual abuse, including child prostitution.

16. Armed conflict has continued to plague the lives of children, killing, maiming and destroying childhoods. Africa has many child combatants. The proliferation of small arms has been one reason why children can be readily recruited into armed forces. Anti-personnel landmines cause a particular toll among children.

17. In 2001, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, there is no reason for complacency, let alone self-congratulation. We need to face the past and present with frankness and honesty.

18. This unfortunate record raises important questions about the rights of the child in Africa. Africa's children are entitled to ask the following questions of their leaders:

(a) Have unforeseen factors made it impossible to realize the goals set out at the World Summit for Children? (e.g., the HIV/AIDS pandemic);

(b) Have external factors outside the control of African Governments, but within the control of the international community, made it impossible to realize these goals? (e.g., declining aid levels, global economic crises);

(c) Have continuing conflicts and civil strife put child rights and actions for ensuring achievements of the time-bound goals in jeopardy?

(d) Have natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and droughts contributed to further deterioration of the situation of children in affected countries, and has Africa not been able to foresee and prepare itself to face these disasters effectively?

(e) Have African Governments themselves not been sufficiently determined in implementing the World Summit for Children Plan of Action? Have corruption and poor governance stood in the way of progress?

(f) Were African leaders sincerely committed to the World Summit for Children Plan of Action when they made their commitment, and did they genuinely commit themselves to realizing the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

19. We surmise that elements of all these factors are to be found, in varying degrees, as reasons for the non-achievement of the World Declaration aims and the non-implementation of the World Summit for Children Plan of Action in full.

20. The socio-economic crisis in Africa has been very severe on the traditional African structure for taking care of the child through the wider family including the community. The crisis has created extreme pressure on the family, in many instances leading to family break-up through death, migration, and other social stresses. These factors also contribute to the break-up of communities. One of the basic rights of the child is to have a good start in life: to grow up in a nurturing and safe environment that promotes physical, mental and emotional growth along with social competence and readiness to learn. These are all strong features of traditional African families and child-rearing practices; but they are threatened by the continent's social and economic crises. As we go about building a child-friendly Africa, we need to start with the family.

21. The issue of child trafficking and child labour reflects a profound crisis of the family. These abuses are related to the inability of the poorest households to provide for themselves. The reconstitution of the family, beginning with the empowerment of women and policies that cater for the poorest of the poor are key to this agenda. Policy makers should go back to the African mother's kitchen.

22. Globalization is simultaneously opening horizons for Africa's most favoured children and limiting the life chances of the poor. In a globalized economy, education and technical skills are the key to success. Africa must invest in its children if it is to compete globally and to achieve economic development. Rehabilitating Africa's educational systems is an imperative for the continent's future.

23. Africa's traditional cultures place children at the centre and provide for nurturance within a strong network of family and kin. But aspects of traditional cultures also disadvantage children and youth: there are some harmful traditional practices (e.g., female genital mutilation), many customary legal systems discriminate against women and children, and young people are excluded from participation in society's decision-making. Africa needs to acknowledge and promote what is best in its cultures, and reform what is no longer appropriate.

24. Rapid urbanization has disrupted traditional cultures and placed children in new environments. Old assumptions about family networks and socialization may no longer hold true in this context. The more formal, legal framework provided by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child is therefore ever-more relevant.

25. Today's social and economic crises have radically changed the world-views and life expectations of Africa's youth. Previous life-trajectories from childhood to adulthood have changed. Many of Africa's young people face the future with a profound sense of uncertainty and foreboding. HIV/AIDS is just one of many dangers that threatens to make their lives shorter, more uncertain and less fulfilling than their parents'. There is a continent-wide need to create an environment in which young people are able to face the future with confidence and hope, and thereby participate in their societies in a positive manner.

26. The uneven progress in fulfilling the 1990 commitments also raises questions about the monitoring and assessment mechanisms appended to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Have these mechanisms been adequately utiiized? Have state parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child submitted their reports on time? What measures have been taken against those that have failed to comply with this, the most basic requirement? What assessments have been made of progress?

27. The record is once again, mixed. A start has been made in monitoring, and in particular the unique provision in the mandate of the Committee for the Rights of the Child, allowing for non-governmental organizations to participate in the mechanism, represents an important step forward. But the monitoring mechanism has been largely toothless.

28. The continuing prevalence of armed conflict in Africa is a major cause for the abuse of children's rights. The protection of children during conflict receives inadequate attention in the World Summit for Children World Declaration and Plan of Action. In the last decade, much experience has been gained concerning the

protection of children in conflict, which needs to be reflected in future international agreements concerning children.

29. Furthermore, although the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child contains clear and explicit commitments to respect the rights of children to participate in decisions concerning their welfare, and to the freedoms of expression, conscience and association, goals and mechanisms for the realization of these important rights are not found in either the World Declaration or Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. There has been some progress (e.g., children's parliaments in some countries), but children and youth remain marginalized. Child participation rights warrant greater attention in future.

30. The World Summit for Children goals were a commitment by national leaders. They have expired, although they remain a framework for assessing performance. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the other hand, are formal legal commitments by States. The legal obligations contained within them do not expire and remain as valid and binding today as when the instruments were first ratified. Present and future national and international policies must be anchored in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Accordingly, we call upon all States members of OAU that have not signed and ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to do so as a matter of urgency.